



Improving life and leadership of assistant principals

Assistant Principal Podcast Content Episode Outline

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Show Description:

Everything has a cost. That cost can be easily measured in time, money, and attention. But the larger and more important cost is opportunity cost. Opportunity cost reflects what we could have done with the time, money, and attention that we spent on doing whatever we did. Because our schools have unlimited needs, everything we do displaces something else that we could have done.

The key to being a strategic leader is to be intentional in our efforts, not by asking “can we do this?” but instead asking “what else could we do with this time, this money, and this attention?”

Show Intro

Hello colleagues and welcome to the Assistant Principal Podcast. I’m your host Frederick Buskey. The goal of this podcast is to help improve the life and leadership of assistant principals. This is a content-focused episode. Actually, it might be a soapbox focused episode because today I am going to interrogate our propensity for mandates.

Celebrations:

- I’ve begun writing my book again, which, as a quadrant 2 activity, have been pushed off multiple times. It feels good.
- The FREE webinar – I hope you will join me
 - Thursday Sept 22, 2022, 7-8:30 EDT
 - Time is not the problem – the real problem
 - Shift your perspective and the way you look at your day
 - Five tips for being strategically reactive
 - Three practices for being proactive.
 - Reg ends tonight. If you don’t have time, then this is definitely for you!
 - Listening to the pod is like living in the same neighborhood. We pass each other on Tuesdays and Fridays and wave hello. Attending the webinar will be like hanging out on my front porch, a safe place where we can get to know each other a bit better.
 - Web link

The Big Idea

- Opportunity cost

The Why

- Inspired by recent conversations with school leaders
 - New curriculum
 - New math programs
 - New testing support programs
 - NC LETRS roll out of ELA program.

The what (MVP version)

Here's why I struggle with this:

1. We are coming off two years of a pandemic – as optimistic as we are about this year, we are also exhausted.
2. I am a foundationalist, and the foundation of classrooms is solid procedures and great teacher-student relationships. In my view, everything else is secondary. The problem is that the majority of classrooms like one or both of these, and early career teachers need extra support.
3. The opportunity cost of every initiative is individualized teacher support
4. Teachers should be in charge of their own growth goals, with few exceptions. Initiatives remove teacher agency and prevent us from being there to support them.

Checking your own pulse

These are my observations and takeaways from the research and my own and other leaders' experiences. It doesn't matter how good a new program is if:

- It cannot be implemented with fidelity
- It cannot be followed up with adequate school support
- It cannot be sustained over time

I have seen nothing to convince me that today's big push or flavor of the month will be done with any of those things.

What do you think?

- What have I said that you agree with?
- What have I said that you disagree with, and why does it not ring true for you?
- In reflecting on the initiatives you have been a part of, how many of them had a lasting impact?
- What could your school look like if all the time, money, and attention spent on these initiatives over the past five years had instead been invested into personalized support of early career teachers?

I think there are alternatives.



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Leading v. bleeding

Four simple thoughts:

1. Slow play, stall, drag your feet, ignore if possible (lack of follow up)
2. Pick one thing that fits with what you are already doing and implement that one thing **with fidelity!** Collect the implementation data and brag to everyone about what a great job you've done.
3. Negotiate. If there are multiple initiatives, talk with your DO. They want what's best so work with them to identify priorities based on the needs and capacity of your staff and students
4. Present a coherent PD plan of what you will be doing that addresses the building and district priorities. Back the plan up with data.

Leaders don't just lead those they are responsible for, they also need to lead up and help grow the people who are serving them. District and state ed jobs can be a grind and filled with pressure and conflict. Everyone is doing the best they can, and as leaders we need to have the discussions that help us to stay grounded and pull our heads out of the weeds long enough to see the forest. I think I'm mixing metaphors, but you get what I mean.

The final takeaway:

Don't just jump through the hoops. Consider the opportunity cost of every investment. Make decisions with your teachers that will meet their most important growth needs.

Show Outro

That wraps up today's content focused episode. We'll be back next week with the amazing Dr. Mary Hemphill in an episode in which we will be playing with the idea of productive disruption. This was a remarkable conversation so I hope you will treat yourself and listen. I guarantee you will be inspired. That's next Tuesday, September 22, 2022.

If you enjoyed today's show, please subscribe and rate this podcast. Ratings really help raise the profile of the podcast. When we first started, even though we were the only podcast that focused exclusively on aps, a search in Apple Podcasts for "ap" would not even show us. Now, we are first show that pops up, thanks to you listeners and especially thanks to those who have left reviews. Even the person who left the one star review – if you are still listening please send me some feedback so I can make the show better.

We have snuck into the top 20 for principals but haven't cracked it for "school leadership." If you enjoy the show, please help people find it by subscribing AND leaving a review.



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You can ask questions, make requests, and give us feedback at frederick@frederickbuskey.com. I would love to hear from you. And if you'd like to come onto my front porch and sit a spell, please sign up for our webinar, Escaping the Black Hole of Urgency. It airs Thursday from 7-8:30 EDT, its free, and you can find the sign-up link at <https://event.webinarjam.com/register/2/532gpun> .

That wraps up today's show! I'm Frederick Buskey and I hope you'll join me next time for the Assistant Principal Podcast.